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We may all be out-of-body travelers

MONROE

(EDITOR'S NOTE —This is the second of a two-part series on one man's experiences in out-of-body travel.)

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AFTON — It was 3 p.m. one August day in 1963. Robert A. Monroe was relaxing in bed at his home near here, trying to go out-of-body to visit a woman vacationing somewhere on the New Jersey coast.

The friend knew nothing of the pending visit, and Monroe, a pioneer in out-of-body travels, did not know precisely where she was vacationing.

Suddenly the familiar warm, vibrating feeling came over him, and he began concentrating on the visit.

"There was the familiar sensation of movement through a light blue blurred area, then I was in what seemed to be a kitchen," Monroe related.

His friend and two teen-age girls were seated in chairs drinking something. In his second body, Monroe first presented himself to the two girls. They did not notice him.

He then asked his friend if she knew he was present. In a kind of subconscious or mental communication, she told him she did. All the while she continued talking with the two girls.

In order to be sure she remembered his visit, he decided to try pinching her. She yelled out, surprising Monroe who didn't think he'd actually be able to do it.

When she returned the following week, he questioned her and discovered she had been pinched.

"A look of complete astonishment crossed her face," Monroe related. "Was that you?" she asked.

She then showed him the black-and-blue marks the pinch had left.

Did the event really happen, or was it just fantasy?

It would be easy to dismiss it as such. But consider the experiences of other out-of-body voyagers as reported in an April 1977 issue of the San Francisco Sunday Examiner-Chronicle.

Ingo Swann, whose ability to leave his body was under study by Stanford Research Institute, Menlo Park, Calif., decided in 1973 to put the phenomenon to the test.

Nine months before the Pioneer 10 spacecraft was scheduled to pass by Jupiter, he and psychic Harold Sherman agreed to "visit" the planet, observe it at close range and compare their findings with those the National Aeronautic and Space Administration's probe would eventually send back.

The two were 2,300 miles apart when they began their trips.

On their return, the data from their observations were compiled and sent to scientists around the country. Though separated by a continent, the two described the same thing.

The results which Pioneer 10 eventually relayed confirmed the "sightings" the two had made.

A year later, the two "probed" Mercury in advance of the spacecraft Marina 10. The results were similar.

Tangible proof such experiences are anything but figments of very fertile imaginations is tough, if not impossible, to come by.

"There probably are many ways to prove it," Monroe said, "but it depends on what you mean by 'prove it'."

For those interested, probably the best proof is participation.

Monroe not only believes everyone has the ability to move out of his physical body, he believes everyone does.

"I think everyone goes out of their

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body during sleep," he explained. "The fact that you don't remember it or are inhibited against remembering it doesn't mean it doesn't happen."

He believes many dreams are distortions of such experiences. The flying dream, he thinks, may be the conscious mind's interpretation of an out-of-body trip; and the falling dream may be the second body re-entering the physical body.

A research program, the M-5000 course, he conducts through the Monroe Institute of Applied Sciences at his country farm near here is seeking to "develop and evaluate a training system in order to understand, control and then utilize the basic bio-energy used to achieve the out-of-body experience," he said.

He has been gathering data from 5,000 persons taking the course.

Monroe estimates 15 percent of those taking the course have out-of-body experiences that they are able to remember. But, he added, for those who continue the exercises taught during the course, virtually 100 percent are successful.

Monroe claims experiences during the last 20 years have given him a unique insight into the circumstances of life as well as death.

"The very concept of death itself is not a religious thing; it is a very normal transition just as birth is," he said.

"We put a big mystique around death. It is the end of a cycle, but it is not a thing to be feared.

"There is life after death," he added.